562 When the girl reaches marriageable age, she usually finds herself
584 with a husband who is sometimes older than her father and whom she cannot possibly love. She must go to him, however, since such is her father's will.

[173] The fiancé brings some gifts (cowries, chickens, millet
583] beer) and claims his wife. The girl is sent off to her husband's home with no ceremony being performed.

This second type of forced marriage has the parents' consent.

587 Marriage by inheritance. When the head of a household dies, the
428 women, who are considered a part of his estate, are divided up just as is the rest of the property. They are apportioned to the sons of
562 the deceased, or his brothers if the sons are not of marriageable age.
768 However, unlike the procedure for a chief's estate, in which the wife is just a "thing," these wives may choose their husbands from among the members of the family.

This is semi-free marriage.

587 Besides the type of marriage which we shall later call "free marriage" -- a form which occurs very frequently since it includes the marriages of loose women who may have as many as nine husbands, only stopping at the last one because of old age -- there is also remarriage due to successive widowhoods. Some women are so
[177] unlucky as to lose [174] a succession of husbands. They are finally avoided like the plague since they have the reputation of being cursed by the gods (Mossi, kombwinga; Bambara, térédiougou).

584 Marriage after a conventional proposal. When a young man wishes to ask for the hand of a young girl who is not yet engaged, he chooses as his go-between a person who is on good terms with the elders of the girl's village. If the response is favorable, the young man brings a chicken, a secco (dagnopinri) [coarse matting] to close the doorway, and some fagots. He goes back to his village and returns at intervals bearing sprouted millet or millet beer and a chicken for the head of the family. The latter at last tells the go-between: "Tell X... that we accept him as our son and that we shall try to give him satisfaction as soon as possible."

Some time later the young man returns once more with a chicken, sprouted millet, or beer for the elders of the village. He makes

428 custom which decrees that he likewise inherits all of his father's responsibilities as head of the family.

428 562 Do daughters and wives share in an estate? Daughters have no share in an estate although their brothers may give them trifling gifts.

Wives never inherit from their husbands. They can only benefit indirectly as the representatives of their young sons. On the contrary, since the wife is considered a piece of property, [259] she is actually a part of the estate to the same extent as the rest of the property left by the deceased.

428 Disposition of an unclaimed estate. Only the canton chief is qualified to inherit the property of a deceased person having no known relatives.

Rights and Obligations Governing Property in the Family

421 Property is owned individually. Individual property is strictly a private matter. The head of the family has no rights over property acquired individually by the women and children or by other relatives under his rule. They may dispose of their possessions as they see fit. A mother may do some trading to provide savings for her children. The head of the family may not use such property under any circumstances without the consent of the true owner.

428 593 Does a husband inherit from his wife? A husband has no right to his wife's property. He cannot even claim it if she dies childless, since in that case it goes to her own relatives (brothers or sisters) or, failing that, to their children.

428 Aside from their rights in their father's estate, children inherit their mother's property.

[426] When the head of a family borrows cowries from [260] a member of his compound, he must repay the loan with a given time. His own property is inalienably his as long as he lives, and then it makes up his estate, along with his wives.

768 428 Disposition of a house after death. When the head of a compound dies, the establishment is not destroyed. It automatically passes to the heirs, that is, to his sons or, if he has no legitimate

768 428 heirs, to his brothers. If the deceased was the keeper and guardian of the family fetish, it is taken to the home of his eldest brother or to a person designated by custom.

We have seen, however, that the Moaga will not live in a home without consulting a soothsayer. Therefore, if the spirits are not favorable to the heir, the home is turned over to the other sons or to the brothers of the deceased. Besides, in many cases the eldest son is already married and the head of a family and already has his own home. He then lodges his dakompa (young unmarried brothers) or one of his uncles in his father's home.

428 426 672 Acceptance or repudiation of inheritances. Consequences. To accept and receive an inheritance involves the obligation to pay the debts and claims against it. Among the Mossi, an inheritance is never refused since a refusal does not free one from the obligation to pay the debts of the deceased. Relatives always collaborate, not because of any feeling for common property -- which [261] does not exist, as we have seen above -- but out of respect for the principle of collective responsibility which has been developed in the interests of public order. Creditors will naturally claim their due first from the legitimate heir, but if the estate cannot meet its obligations, all of the close relatives are jointly responsible.

428 The estate does not include any gifts made to members of the family by the deceased during his lifetime.

Wills. Among the Mossi, a will is always made orally.

In the presence of his relatives -- uncles and brothers -- and of his neighbors, who have been assembled for the occasion, the testator makes known his last wishes to his legitimate heir, who will have full rights as his testamentary successor. However, in the event that the will is intended to disinherit the legitimate heir and if for some reason or other he is not present, the testator will entrust the execution of his last wishes to the oldest member of the family present.

Disinheritance of the heir presumptive. In the presence of witnesses and under the conditions indicated above, the testator explains his reasons for disinheriting the heir presumptive. In the event that the reasons seem insufficient, the witnesses will seek

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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dom during the interregnum.[23] The latter task was especially suited to a prime minister, since the Mossi regarded the interregnum as the most difficult period in their political life. The Ouidi Naba's administrative tasks were considered so important that he never went to war and was theoretically immune from punishment or execution by the Mogho Naba. This immunity was necessary, because the Mogho Naba had the right to execute anyone who brought him unwelcome news, and often did so. Since the Ouidi Naba announced good news as well as bad, it would have been folly to subject him to this rule. Some reports in the French colonial archives state that the Mogho Naba was expected to follow the Ouidi Naba's advice at all times, and could not veto any of his actions. These reports add, moreover, that if a Ouidi Naba considered a Mogho Naba dangerous for the welfare of the country, he could rightfully compel the ruler to kill himself. According to Lambert, one Ouidi Naba known as Baba forced Mogho Naba Karfo (ca. 1800) to commit suicide. It appears that aside from waging a long and unpopular war against Naba Djighima of Lalle, this Mogho Naba had seized the riches of his wealthy subjects for distribution among the poor. Moreover, he allegedly dispensed justice without making much distinction between nobles and commoners, which so displeased the nobles that they encouraged the Ouidi Naba to put Karfo to death. Baba sent the sovereign a poisoned arrow and a message consisting of a single word: *ki* (die). Karfo allegedly committed suicide that very night.[24]

Thus, it appears that under certain conditions the prime minister could impeach his "all-powerful" sovereign. We cannot assume, however, that all prime ministers were sufficiently powerful to control the Mogho Naba. Many Mogho Nanamse limited their Ouidi Naba to merely giving advice on affairs of state and insisted that he concern himself solely with his own province.

The provinces administered by the five ministers were made up of smaller entities or districts. The districts in the provinces of the Ouidi Naba, the Larhalle Naba, and the Gounga Naba were ruled by the sons and other descendants of ancient Mogho Nanamse. The province controlled by the Kamsaogho Naba was more important. His districts were the wealthiest and among the most populous in the nation, and they brought the largest revenues to the Mogho Naba. The reason for this, of course, was that the Kamsaogho Naba was a eunuch and had no heirs; when he died, all his riches reverted to the Mogho Naba. The province controlled by the Baloum Naba was the most difficult to administer. Its districts were ruled by the sons of recent Mogho Nanamse who felt that as holders of the nam they were free to appropriate the goods of the population. The Baloum

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631 651 643 114 [648] [669] because of this delinquency, the Mogho Naba might hesitate to come to the aid of any of his vassals if a general war broke out. It is true that the Mogho Naba did not aid the Yatenga ruler when the French arrived. But whether this was because of his failure to pay taxes, or because the French conquest of the Yatenga coincided with a civil war there, we shall probably never know. We do know that many of the Mogho Naba's vassals came to his aid when the French finally arrived at Ouagadougou. It is my opinion that the gifts exchanged between Yatenga and Ouagadougou were not "tributary," but were more in the nature of tokens of friendship between two peers.

643 645 692 651 [431] The Mogho Naba and his provincial ministers also received revenue as a function of their judicial roles. The nature and disposition of the fines levied against legal offenders were discussed in Chapter V. The Mogho Naba's fees came in the form of the traditional gifts the litigants gave him even before their cases were tried. These gifts were never regarded as bribes, for this would have contradicted the Mossi axiom that "the truth is at Ouagadougou."

643 651 634 768 [428] The Mogho Naba inherited all the property of the Kamsaogho Naba, and claimed all the property of district chiefs who died without close relatives. He also received inheritance taxes (fado) from the estates of deceased district chiefs. In collecting the fado, the Mogho Naba first retained the horse on which the messenger came to announce the chief's death. He reciprocated by sending envoys with cowries and animals to be offered to their common ancestors at the chief's funeral. After the funeral, the envoys claimed the dead chief's quiver of arrows to take to Ouagadougou for deposit with those of other dead chiefs. Then they demanded the fado, and jestingly told the heirs that the Mogho Naba would be satisfied with nothing less than "a thousand of everything" (*tusri bumbu fa*) the deceased had possessed: wives, slaves, horses, cows, goats, chickens, articles of clothing, and so on. The heirs pleaded poverty and jokingly gave the envoys a few old and sickly animals, old chickens, tattered pieces of clothing, etc. Eventually, they handed out the fado, which usually consisted of livestock, clothing, food, weapons, jewelry, cowries, and even slaves. Lastly, they gave the envoys the chief's ceremonial horse and presents for themselves.

643 645 651 439 [48] The Mogho Naba and his ministers collected a considerable amount of revenue from the traders who visited Ouagadougou and the larger market towns and village markets throughout the kingdom.[8] The Mossi (especially the assimilated Yarse) were good traders, and they benefited from their country's strategic location between the Sahara and the forest regions. According to Barth, some six caravan routes crossed the country, linking